

English as Second Language in India and Acculturation

Darshana Suresh Bhave (p20170433@goa.bits-pilani.ac.in), Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Birla Institute of Technology and Sciences, Pilani, K. K. Birla, Goa Campus, Goa, India



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Abstract: *Language is a core part of culture. In meeting of two languages, meeting of two cultures is obvious. Language and culture cannot be separated. Language learning is a process of transformation hence it needs support of culture. English, though not at the first position among most spoken languages, it has become a major second language in many countries like India. Second language acquisition becomes second culture acquisition as the learner learns the culture of the target language. The process of becoming adapted to a new culture is Acculturation. Acculturation in India has taken place through mainly learning of English as second language. Mixed contact languages of English and other Indian local languages have developed different pidgins. Many Indians have taken native like command on English language. So it can be said that Indians have adapted British Culture through Acculturation by learning English as second language.*

Keywords: Acculturation, Culture and Language, English, Second Language in India

Introduction

The National Centre for Cultural Competence defines “Culture is integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations.” Culture is the source of language and language is the vehicle of culture. These words truly give the importance of language in cultural context. Language may be the first or second, it automatically comes with its culture and which is inevitably learnt by the language learner.

There are many languages in the world which are learnt as the first, second or as one of the multi-languages by a person. As per the calculation of the Ethnologue of world languages, the world has currently 6909 living languages. India alone has 1652 as total number of mother tongues as per census of 1961. Around 150 of them have enough speakers; while 22 languages have been chosen as the official languages of India.

English is not at the first position among most spoken languages in the world, but it has got immense importance as the global language of communication. English has become much popular as foreign/second language in many of the countries like India, as people from different countries need some common ground of understanding for communication. Globalization is even responsible in increasing popularity of English language.

English started as a language of small Germanic Tribes and further expanded more through colonization. It adapted many words from the other languages it came in contact with and through this English developed its vocabulary.

Every language when goes to some other region than its birthplace, it does not give and take only words and structures but it carries with it the history and culture of the region, where the language has its origin.

In meeting of two languages, meeting of two cultures is quite obvious because culture is the source of language and language is the carrier of culture.

This paper focuses the phenomenon of adapting culture of English people while learning English as second language in India, under the framework of Acculturation, Pidginization and Nativization. To understand this impact, it becomes necessary to first understand the relationship between language and culture.

The Relation of Language and Culture

Cultural Iceberg Model

Developed by Edward T. Hall in 1976

The external tip of the iceberg is the conscious surface of a culture

The vast part of the iceberg that is hidden, is the subconscious aspect of a culture



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According to Edward T. Hall, the Cultural Iceberg indicates Visible Aspects and Invisible aspects of culture. The visible aspects include many things like clothing, heroes, symbols, food etc. while the invisible culture in the submerged part of the iceberg includes beliefs, perceptions, and values etc. which influence on how people learn language.

Research by Yang also has suggested Culture clearly includes beliefs, perception and values which affect language learning including general learning style and specific learning strategies. This clearly indicates that language and culture are surely interrelated. Culture is not the only determinant of language learning but it plays a significant role in language learning.

It becomes necessary for a language learner to learn the culture of the language which the learner is going to learn. Culture is a major content in understanding the language. Learning does not merely mean process of transfer or transmission, but learning is quite like a process of transformation. This transformation necessarily takes place in language learner in terms of culture. All this always happens when a child learns his mother tongue. He develops the knowledge of culture with language learning and knowledge of language with culture learning.

Second Language Acquisition and Culture

Language learning is always situated in the cultural context- it may be the first language learning or second. The activities and cultural influences cannot be separated from what is learnt in foreign or second language acquisition. Even though one learns second language, he has to learn linguistic aspects of the target culture. So we can say that Second Language Acquisition is in short Second Culture Acquisition.

Second Language Acquisition can be studied under the Theory of Acculturation which includes Nativization and Pidginization.

Acculturation and Second Language Learning

The concept of acculturation was coined in 1880 by American geologist John Wesley Powell. Brown defines "Acculturation is the process of becoming adapted to a new culture." Acculturation is also defined as the process in which a person or group from one culture comes in contact with another culture, adopting the values and practices of the other but still they retain their own identity. Acculturation is a

process of cultural change and psychological change, which results into the meeting between cultures. In case of second language learning, it is very important to know how the learner's community and the target language community are related to each other.

Sometimes, acculturation takes place due to the dominance of one culture over the other one as a result of military or political conquest. Many times second language remains the impact of imperial rule or colonization which makes the people of a particular region to learn some second language to develop common ground of understanding between the rulers and the citizens. The same thing happened in India which gave importance to English-the actual language of British as second language of Indians.

Acculturation gives birth to intercultural language learning which includes understanding of the learner's own language and culture in relation to some other language and culture. Through acculturation, changes in food, clothing and language etc. can be observed. Acculturation thus leads to learning of second culture which takes place in the process of second language learning because culture and language are incomplete without each other and thus they cannot be separated.

Acculturation and English as Second Language in India

English arrived to India as the result of colonization. The imperial rule of British made Indians familiar with English. Thomas Macaulay was the first law member in the Governor General's Council. He started promoting English language as a tool to educate people by teaching western thoughts and ideals. In 1844, English became the official language. It was declared by British, that persons having knowledge of English language would be given preference in the public employment. This helped the spread of English education in India. Though the British rule got over and India became free, English remained as the second language of many of the Indians along with their thousands of local languages as their mother-tongues.

English did not just fight with the local languages but it became a major official language of India. English also gave a tough fight to Hindi to become National Language of India. Though it did not become the National Language of India, it remained and still it is very close to the heart of Indians because through government, higher education, as major language of media and communication; English had a great impact on the minds of people.

While adapting English as the second language, as per the theory of Acculturation, Indians even accepted the cultural aspects of English. Today our day begins with 'Good Morning!' or even the arrangement of this conference related to theme of English language or Western theories and so on is the impact of Acculturation only. Most of the times, 'Formal' dress for us consists of long sleeved shirt, trouser, necktie or even suit to be worn at the temperature of 30-35 degrees, is the ultimate impact of acculturation through learning of English as our second language.

Tea is an inevitable part of an Indian person. It is as well the gift of British to Indians. Cake has become inevitable part of snacks in India today. Almost no birthday party takes place without cake! Soups and salads became the part of Indian menu today. The old system of serving food on banana leaves changed to plates, glasses, spoons and forks. This is all due to the impact of British Culture on Indians. Cricket is the national game of Britain but there will be hardly any Indian who does not have Cricket close to his heart.

Social customs and traditions even changed in India after Indians started learning English and studied the British culture. The practices like *Sati* where the widowed wife of a dead husband was used to be burnt became illegal and punishable. Female infanticide was banned. The widow remarriage act was passed. The customs like offering children as sacrifice to please God and so on were stopped. Indians follow the culture of British because India's accepted official language is 'British English' with 'Received Pronunciation.'

The fact is that, though British Rule ended before 70 years, their language is still alive in India and as an impact of language, the culture even prevails the Indian minds.

Pidginization and English as Second Language in India

Pidgin is a contact language or a mixed language developed by speakers of two different languages for their communication. It is usually based on acculturation and the process of acquiring pidgin is known as Pidginization. The Pidginization of English first came into existence after contact of British with Indians in East Indian Company. The process of code mixing took place to form pidgins of English with many Indian languages.

Calcutta was a major center of trade and business during British rule. So Bengali and English formed pidgins. E.g. *Babu* is an original word from Bengali which was used in English for a person working as a clerk.

Today even the terms like Indian English, American English are popular, which are nothing but the varieties of Pidgin. In case of Indian English, pronunciation of English words in Indian style of pronunciation takes place, the rules of grammar change from that of original English etc.

The sounds like /f/ becomes 'ph', sound /r/ does not remain silent though it comes at the end position, as in teacher. Instead it is clearly pronounced. In some regions of India, /ʃ/ is pronounced as /s/ and /s/ is pronounced as /ʃ/. This is the result of impact of local languages of India on English.

Nativization and English as Second Language in India

Nativization is the process where language gets its native speakers. As Kachru quotes, there are several varieties, localized registers and genres for articulating local social, cultural and religious identities because of deep social penetration and the extended range of functions of English in diverse sociolinguistic contexts.

In case of English in India, the parents from one generation learnt English as second language and their children from the next generation became the native speakers of English. Indian English has made its own identity in the linguistic world. Communicative needs and new cultural and social identities became necessary for Indians, from the viewpoint of globalization. The process of Nativization thus became a necessary thing in countries like India.

English became so native in India that Indian English literature even flourished with typical Indian syntax, vocabulary, metaphors, and expressions. Modernism and cosmopolitanism even contributed for nativization of English in India. Now a days, speaking in English has become a 'Status Symbol, which even gives rise to native speakers of English in India. The growing I.T. industry, Communication Media, Corporate Industries, Electronic Media and certain things demand English language and the current generation hence adapt English as their native language.

Findings

- Culture is combination of knowledge and characteristics gained by a group of people; about language, religion, customs, habits, art forms etc.
- Language cannot be learnt as only language; it comes along with the culture of its own.
- Language is the submerged and most important part of any culture.
- Learning language is a process of transformation and hence it needs the support of the target culture.
- Second language learning becomes second culture learning for the second language learner.

- The cultural and psychological change in the second language learner speeds up the process of Acculturation.
- English became second language of India after imperial rule of British, which made Indians to adapt many cultural factors of original British Culture.
- English as second language made many changes in Indian cuisine, eating style, dressing style, sports and games etc.
- Rise of English language and impact of English culture eradicated the bad social and religious customs.
- As the impact of Acculturation, the code mixing took place, which gave birth to pidgins which had the domination of local languages over English.
- The process of Nativization fastened, as the parents having English as their Second Language have the children who are native speakers of English.

Conclusion

After the colonization and imperial rule of British people, English became important second language of India. Indians not only learnt the language and took it as second language, but the people accepted British culture as their second culture.

The Indians started the code mixing and formed the pidgins of English for their communication. These pidgins have too much impact of linguistic elements of India's local languages. Through Pidginization, Indian English flourished as an important variety of English, not only for communication but also in the field of English Literature.

English even got native speakers in India through the process of Nativization with parents speaking English as second language and their children as native speakers of English.

So it can be said that surely Acculturation along with pidginization and nativization show the cultural adaptations of Indians as Second Language Learners of English.

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